MARVEL
PG 26

EXILES™

HARD CHOICES PART 1 OF 2

NEW YORK CITY

Chaos theory says that the motion of a butterfly's wings can change weather patterns on the other side of the world.

Come on, man! You can afford it!

Look at that coat! I could eat all year for what you paid for that coat!

HEROES FOR HIRE, INC.

The idea being that small movements have profound, unforeseen impact.

My check was short again last week, Rand. I didn't get paid for the Octopus job.

This new electronic vouchering system is $#!#, and you better take care of it!

In certain realities, something screwed up, the butterfly flapped its wings a moment too late--

--and everything changed.

Mister Rand, the man from the IRS is in conference room twelve.

He said he's found some discrepancies that he needs to discuss with you at your earliest convenience.

In other realities, the butterfly flapped its wings a moment too early--

--and everything changed.

The *Japanese* are on the satellite phone again.

Moses Magnum has upped the ante and is threatening to sink Japan at midnight if they don't make him *absolute ruler*.

Are there any more of those donuts left, Luke?

I didn't have any breakfast.

Sorry, Danny. This is the last one.

Welcome to Heroes For Hire, the international business offices of--

--Peter Rasputin, Colossus--

--Danny Rand, Iron Fist--

--and Luke Cage, Power Man.

Silver Samurai via Japan

MOSES MAGNUM

Dammit, Luke! You eat like there's no tomorrow.

All I wanted was *one* lousy donut--

RAND!

Where the hell have you been?!

These three men employ every major super-powered human on Earth.

Back off, Silver Samurai.

You do *not* want to start out on my *bad side* this morning.

Here.

You can have the rest.

Ordinarily, Danny is the voice of reason--

Your **bad** side? We have offered you **two billion** for your best people and you **refuse** us--

--the calm and authoritative power behind this security operation.

There is a difference between *"refusing"* and asking for fair compensation.

You want Black Knight, Scorpion *and* the rest of the *"Avengers package,"* you *pay* for the rest of the "Avenger package".

And the basic "Avenger package" *begins* at *five* billion.

But today Danny is the butterfly.

You hold out when billions of lives hang in the balance?!

THAT'S REPREHE--

=CLIK=

No, Samurai.

That's *business.*

The butterfly that doesn't flap its wings--

TOKYO, JAPAN

--at all.

They are the EXILES

It's their job to poke the butterfly.

It's their job to fix the mistakes in every reality.

Oh my God!

OH MY GOD!

Where do we start?

Where can we possibly begin?

What does the Tallus say, Mimic?

Probably that we have to let them all die, huh?

As a matter of fact--

No, wait! I was just kidding!

Gallows humor. Black comedy. *Bad joke,* you know?

Morph. *Chill.*

Why would we need to be here just to *let* them die?

My parents.

My God, my parents are a few miles from here.

Not to *let* them die, Nocturne.

To prevent them from being *saved.*

We can't do that.

Mimic, I'm a doctor.

Mimic!

There are more people in there, and I need to go find my parents!

If you change to steel form you can--

Hey, what are you all doing just standing around?!

There are people *dying* here.

No.

No, that *can't* be what the *Timebroker* wants!

OVER THE COAST OF JAPAN...

You okay, Danny?

You've been kinda quiet since last night.

NO, Luke, I am *not* okay.

Millions of people are dead because I woke up on the wrong side of the bed this morning.

I am definitely not okay.

We talked all this through when we decided to *start* the business, Danny.

We're not a group of cops or vigilante do-gooders.

This is a *business*, and sometimes the choices we make--

Millions of *people*, Luke.

That's not a business decision. That's aiding and abetting *genocide*.

Oh, *cry me a river*, Rand.

You did *nothin'*, all right?

Moses Magnum killed all those Japanese, and your *whinin'* for some of the responsibility is gettin' on my nerves--

--so just shut the hell up and get us there so I can *kill* somethin'--

--and do it with a *clear conscience* for a change!

TOKYO

The *Avengers* were supposed to be here to protect Japan, and die trying, Sunfire.

No.

And after that Moses Magnum is supposed to kill Victor von Doom to complete the conquest of Europe, and the world.

NO!

And the entire Japanese race and culture is supposed to be extinguished within ten years on this world.

NO, NO, NOOOO!

When did you lose all your humanity?!

Blink would have never let this happen!

Isn't this the kind of thing those other Exiles--

--those killers from *Weapon X* are supposed to handle?

The Timebroker said *they* existed to do the really *dirty*--

The Timebroker is a *construct* of our collective subconscious--

--which has changed *significantly* since he first gave you instructions.

Illyana's right. Blink's not here anymore, and I miss her like hell... but things change.

Not that I *believe* the Timebroker has anything to do with our collective subconscious, but--

What do you mean?

Never mind. It doesn't matter.

We should just finish this job and move on.

Just point me at the Avengers.

I can't believe I'm *hearing* this!

We're talking about the death of a culture!

GENOCIDE! MILLIONS OF INNOCENT PEOPLE!

On THIS world, Sunfire! In THIS reality!

There are millions of OTHER worlds with happy Japanese running ALL OVER THEM.

You're revolting, Illyana.

I don't agree with how she says it, *Nocturne*, but she's right.

We're not here to judge, we're here to do what we're *told* so we can *go home!*

And I, for one, am *sick* of looking at all your faces--

--especially when the next job could mean I get to look at the faces of people I remember--

--people I *love*.

You disgust me.

All of you.

And to think you called yourselves *"heroes"* on your worlds.

How is this any different from the lives we chose in our home realities?

You go off to fight for something you *believe in* there--

--you run *just* as much risk of never getting home!

You took that chance *every time* you chose to get involved in your own reality.

I did not *choose* to be here, Sunfire.

That makes *no* difference.

It's the ideals we stood for, the ideals we chose to DEFEND that--

I've already compromised my ideals a hundred times over, Mariko.

Two months ago I beat Namor to death in an inferno.

A few hours ago I broke Juggernaut's neck to keep him from killing all of Russia.

And today I kill the Avengers and the Japanese race dies--

--and maybe--

--*MAYBE*--

--I finally go home to *my* world, where Japan still exists--

--and all of this was just a *horribly* bad dream.

None of it ever *really* happened.

You're a good man, Calvin.

And I know you've been pushed beyond what's fair or right to expect of anyone.

But I'm here to tell you this *isn't* a bad dream--

--It's a bad *reality*.

And we need to decide something-- right *here*-- right *now*.

Do we make a stand for our ideals and say "to hell with the Timebroker ***and*** the Tallus!" and do what we *know* is right?

Or do we let them turn us into another Weapon X and *blindly* do whatever we're told?

Something we *weren't* until they began manipulating us through these worlds?

Do we let the *Timebroker* define us?

Or do we continue to define *ourselves*--

--as *heroes*?

You're right.

You're absolutely right.

How is she *possibly* right?

Who are *you* to arbitrarily throw *my* life away?

It isn't arbitrary, Illyana.

We've all been doing this longer than you, and no one knows for sure if we ever *really* get to go home, anyway.

Well, I don't like this.

And I don't *care*. I choose to define myself as a hero.

Now, who knows anything about Magnum and his whereabouts?

Moses Magnum had a *secret island* abode in the Kuril Island chain.

The only thing that could beat him was *Banshee* and his brain splitting, ultrasonic *scream*.

Elementary, really.

But there are people here that need our help.

Then we'll do what we always do, and split into groups.

Sasquatch, Illyana and I will go after Magnum while the rest of you stay here and help the wounded as best you can.

I'm not a doctor, but I play one on TV.

Not now, Morph.

I'm beginning to think *"Not now"* is my actual first name, you guys say it so often.

Just trying to keep things right.. sheesh!

Someone should meet the *Avengers* where the Tallus told us they would be.

Tell them where we are and *team up* with them.

That's a good idea. We can use all the help we can get, if this is an indication of Magnum's power

You fly Sasquatch to Magnum's air and I'll go find the Avengers--

--and this will all be over in *no time.*

OVER TOKYO, JAPAN...

My God... I never thought he'd do it

I *honestly* never thought he'd do it.

None of us did, Danny.

Who could?

Someone is there, Luke.

Waving us down

It's weird but she looks a lot like my little sister, Illyana. . .

. .all grown up, I mean.

What's a blonde woman with a sword doing out here n the middle of this, Colossus?

Let's land and ask her.

Maybe she's here to help, too?

Hold up.

What's she doing? Is she getting *under us?*

It's probably just our v ewing angle.

Don't worry, you won't land on her. She'll get out of the way.

KABOOM!

nNNH!

CHUD

MY LEGS!

MYYYY LEEEEEEGS?!

God, would you SHUT-UP!

It's not like you're going to *need* them anymore.

THE KURIL ISLAND CHAIN

I don't know about you, Calvin, but that looks like an *evil lair* to me.

My guess is Magnum's there.

I imagine there are going to be sentry guards. probably robotic.

We'll do what we can.

Mimic?

Do you think there's a possibility that the Timebroker is actually *grooming us--*

you know, *training us?*

As opposed to what he's claiming?

In the time we've had bouncing around to his whim, I've considered just about *every* possibility, Sasquatch.

Now get ready, I'm transforming to *organic steel.*

We're going into freefall.

CHOOP~

TOKYO

KANG!

AVENGERS! ANYBODY!

I NEED HELP!

JUST DIE, DAMN YOU!

SWISH

Don't you get it? Huh? You're supposed to be dead anyway!

So just do us all a favor--

--AND SHUT UP AND DIE LIKE YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO!

Oh, God not like this

SHLUCK

There's a *reasonable* explanation for all of this.

I don't care to hear any of it.

Turn around-

--and drop the sword, lady--

Illyana?! It's me, *Peter*, your *brother!*

My God, it *is* you. How did you *grow up* so fast?

What are you doing here in Japan-- with that sword?

Peter?

My God... I have to kill my brother?

MOSES MAGNUM'S LAIR

WHERE'S MAGNUM?!

I'M GETTING TIRED OF ASKING THIS QUESTION!

WHERE IS MOSES MAGNUM?!

HE WENT TO THE TOKYO AREA!

SOMETHING ABOUT PEOPLE HELPING AND PUTTING A STOP TO IT!

He took most of his soldiers and went to kill whoever is helping the Japanese.

TOKYO

Mariko-- we should go find your parents.

I keep trying, but there are so many people that I *can't* just walk past them all.

Are you okay, Morph?

You haven't tried to be funny in over an hour.

Well... it's a little *hard* to find any humor at the moment.

I'm sorry it took something like this, but I have to say--

--I find you a more interesting, well-rounded person when you turn the *joke machine* off from time to time.

So does that mean you'll have sex with me now?

I don't know...

...try looking like *Spider-Woman* and we'll talk.

Uh, guys?

We have company.

Indeed you do, my dear.

In fact, I'm *Moses Magnum*-- the *host* of this little party you're crashing--

--and I'm here to toss you out of this life on your *ear*.

TO BE CONTINUED